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**Cuban Civil Society Support Program
(CCSSP)**

Contract Number DOT-I-00-03-00009-00 TO 4

Monthly Report

February 2012

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1. Country Situation Update

Economic Reforms

Cuban citizens continue to express growing disillusionment with the pace and substance of current economic reforms, as changes cause inflationary prices that reduce ordinary Cubans' purchasing power. Cuba's National Office of Statistics (*Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas – ONE*) reported that meat and produce prices rose an average of 19.8% in 2011, following the initial implementation of economic reforms in April of last year. Coupled with reduced imports and stagnant agricultural production, Raúl Castro's priorities of agricultural reform and increased food production have not produced positive impacts on people's daily lives. At the same time, *ONE* also reported that state wages – the only source of income for 40% of the population who do not have access to remittances or other sources of income – rose only marginally to \$19 per month.

Cuba's dire housing shortage, a spate of five multi-story building collapses within a period of 10 days in late January, and a recent fire has also contributed to the disillusionment with economic reforms. Cuba's National Housing Institute (*Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda – INV*) reports a housing deficit of 600,000 dwellings, but independent analysts project the deficit to be closer to 1.7 million dwellings with up to 5.3 million Cubans needing homes. Recent reforms allowing the private sale of homes between citizens have not been widely implemented because of complicated tax issues and the prohibitive expense for most Cubans. While these reforms aim to promote market forces to resolve the housing crisis, most Cuban citizens still expect the State to ultimately take responsibility for the issue, and related crisis events.

Repression and Human Rights

Reports of repression, intimidation and harassment appear daily in the written press, independent blogs and human rights organization websites, with incidents happening across the island. On February 26, 2012 twenty members of the *Damas de Blanco* were detained after attending mass at Santa Rita Church in Havana, allegedly for trying to use a different bus stop from the one they usually use. State Security followed the women from one stop to another, and forced them onto buses where they kept them for more than four and a half hours. Berta Soler, the group's leader, later reported that one by one, women were taken off the buses and forced into patrol cars and driven to neighborhoods far from their homes. Soler also indicated that one of the State Security agents informed the women that Security "would not permit any women dressed in white to walk together in any of Havana's streets."

The previous week, José Daniel Ferrer García, coordinator of the Cuban Patriotic Union (*Unión Patriótica Cubana – UNPACU*) was detained for three days in an undisclosed location. Ferrer García asserted that he was detained violently after returning from meetings with diplomats, human rights activities and other dissidents. He reported that during his detention he began a hunger strike that he would continue until other detainees and prisoners of conscience were released.

According to the Foundation for Human Rights in Cuba, State Security impeded a meeting in Matanzas of the Pedro Luis Boitel Party for Democracy (*Partido por la Democracia Pedro Luis Boitel*). On the day of the meeting, seven members of the party were arrested by State Security and three others were confined to their homes when attempting to attend the meeting.

2. Programmatic Highlights and Major Activities

Programmatic Activities:

Key Programmatic Accomplishments:

- **Sector CP** - *This innovative sector seeks to counter apathy and stimulate civic engagement by supporting media projects that communicate positive, unbiased messages through different aspects of everyday life and humor. In previous activities under this sector, the CCSSP created a variety of media products and was able to shape the social content of the items produced to promote civic analysis and a sense of duty for the targeted audience.*
- [SJO101]: This grant is a follow-on to SJO074 and SJO092 and supports the production of four additional deliverables within this initiative. The fifth deliverable was released and distributed in February. The sixth deliverable was submitted for approval, and is scheduled for release in March. A cost extension is under review to produce two additional deliverables for a total of eight under the initiative. If the extension is approved, the seventh deliverable will be produced and distributed in March.
- [SJO102]: This grant is a continuation to grants SJO070 and SJO079. The fourth set of deliverables was approved and distributed in February. The social network dissemination strategy continues successfully, with constant growth among the local audience.
- [SJO103]: As a follow-on activity to SJO076, this grant supports additional products for distribution. The dissemination strategy was revisited again in February, and the grantee has proposed a new strategy for piloting in March to increase the target audience base, to increase product approval among the target audience.
- [SJO104]: This grant launched a new product for distribution across several platforms targeted toward a new audience. The grantee continued to develop a design process based on the draft deliverable approved in December. The grantee has advanced production of the final deliverable and is on schedule to complete grant objectives.
- [SJO105]: This grant will launch a new product influenced by activities under SJO104. The grantee has started final production on the approved draft components, and has submitted two additional draft components for approval. The technical and project management team held a strategic meeting in January with Creative staff to confirm details of the final product development plan.
- [SJO106]: Follow-on activities to SJO083 have been delayed due to travel schedules of grantee staff and other logistical matters. If activities and staffing cannot be adjusted to continue implementation, this initiative may be cancelled.
- [SJO107]: This grant will support a tool developed under SJO084. Following a launch of the tool in December and initial dissemination in January, a viral distribution campaign was launched in February to promote local user participation. To complement the local campaign, a broad public relations campaign was launched simultaneously to promote the tool across mainstream communications channels. The tool has supported one set of users to date, and interest in using and supporting the tool continues to grow.
- **Sector CP (2)** - *This sector has exponentially exceeded expectations, and has demonstrated a true desire for freedom of expression and a need for increased networking capacity on the island. Therefore, the CCSSP has allocated significant resources toward achieving further success in this sector.*

- [SJO098]: The revised deliverable was approved with additional final changes in late February, and will be implemented under the follow-on grant to SJO100. This grant will move into administrative closeout in March.
- [SJO100]: The grant period was extended at no additional cost through February 29, 2012 to support further sustainability activities. The grantee has proposed additional deliverables and submitted a budget that is currently under review by Creative. This follow-on grant may be delayed until pending administrative issues are resolved.
- **Sector US** – *In this sector, CCSSP explored the reality of this population group and discovered significant potential for civic initiatives. With Latin American NGOs whose experience and characteristics are similar to the target population, civic activities are conducted to influence independent action.*
- **Other Activities**
 - [SJO082]: This grant was selected for an internal audit conducted in February by the Program Development Officer and Creative's Field Finance Manager. Findings were presented and discussed with the Chief of Party, Operations Manager, and the OTI Country Representative, determining that corrective actions were required by the grantee. The grant is in administrative closeout and future activities will be discussed based on the grantee's responses to the audit recommendations. We anticipate no obstacles to the full execution of required corrective actions
 - [SJO090]: The grantee is in the process of collecting all necessary information to produce a monitoring and evaluation audiovisual product captured during field work. This tool will provide OTI/Creative with primary source evidence of programmatic activities conducted in the field. Creative expects to receive the final version of this tool in March.
 - [SJO096]: The beneficiaries submitted programmatic and financial reports for the first set of activities, and reporting for the first Cash Disbursement was finalized and approved. A second Cash Disbursement has been issued to support remaining activities included in the approved work plan.
 - [SJO099]: This grant is currently in administrative closeout. The grantee submitted documentation for final payments, which are currently under review. The final evaluation will be written upon approval of all activity reports.

Program Operations

- Grants cleared to date: **107** (14 in process, 15 completed, 66 closed, 7 cancelled, 5 rejected after clearance)

Status Count				
Pending	Cleared	Completed	Closed	Cancelled / Rejected
0	14	15	66	7 / 10* *5 had been cleared

CLEARED		
1	SJO090	\$45,418.00
2	SJO096	\$50,425.00
3	SJO097	\$49,482.00
4	SJO098	\$70,000.00
5	SJO099	\$61,952.00
6	SJO100	\$175,400.00
7	SJO101	\$157,290.00
8	SJO102	\$81,301.00
9	SJO103	\$13,164.00
10	SJO104	\$66,158.00
11	SJO105	\$99,323.00
12	SJO106	\$29,266.00
13	SJO107	\$127,492.00
14	SJO109	\$72,620.00
Subtotal:		\$1,099,291.00

COMPLETED		
1	SJO061	\$26,671.00
2	SJO075	\$30,509.00
3	SJO076	\$71,104.00
4	SJO078	\$39,553.00
5	SJO079	\$65,219.00
6	SJO082	\$185,409.00
7	SJO083	\$35,491.00
8	SJO084	\$91,254.00
9	SJO085	\$42,903.00
10	SJO087	\$90,000.00
11	SJO092	\$80,443.00
12	SJO093	\$90,000.00
13	SJO094	\$144,922.00
14	SJO095	\$36,760.00
15	SJO108	\$15,231.00
Subtotal:		\$1,045,469.00

CLOSED		
1	SJO001	\$95,420.00
2	SJO003	\$17,157.00
3	SJO006	\$81,421.00
4	SJO007	\$123,098.00
5	SJO008	\$34,332.00
6	SJO009	\$24,256.00

7	SJO010	\$30,359.00
8	SJO011	\$19,601.00
9	SJO012	\$14,204.00
10	SJO014	\$47,453.00
11	SJO015	\$7,328.00
12	SJO016	\$72,709.00
13	SJO017	\$2,345.00
14	SJO018	\$12,759.00
15	SJO019	\$89,059.00
16	SJO020	\$11,430.00
17	SJO022	\$72,098.00
18	SJO024	\$12,784.00
19	SJO025	\$86,994.00
20	SJO026	\$4,655.00
21	SJO027	\$4,743.00
22	SJO028	\$63,655.00
23	SJO029	\$57,625.00
24	SJO030	\$17,830.00
25	SJO031	\$5,876.00
26	SJO032	\$78,769.00
27	SJO033	\$74,390.00
28	SJO034	\$65,522.00
29	SJO035	\$19,429.00
30	SJO036	\$14,525.00
31	SJO037	\$36,210.00
32	SJO038	\$99,163.00
33	SJO039	\$38,510.00
34	SJO040	\$141,427.00
35	SJO041	\$4,947.00
36	SJO042	\$21,551.00
37	SJO044	\$86,900.00
38	SJO046	\$21,940.00
39	SJO047	\$29,152.00
40	SJO048	\$4,542.00
41	SJO049	\$89,900.00
42	SJO050	\$129,050.00
43	SJO052	\$53,161.00
44	SJO053	\$12,248.00
45	SJO054	\$30,309.00
46	SJO055	\$55,503.00
47	SJO056	\$69,091.00

48	SJO057	\$4,538.00
49	SJO058	\$125,571.00
50	SJO062	\$54,802.00
51	SJO063	\$8,819.00
52	SJO064	\$4,284.00
53	SJO065	\$25,886.00
54	SJO066	\$17,316.00
55	SJO067	\$86,732.00
56	SJO068	\$49,059.00
57	SJO069	\$19,149.00
58	SJO070	\$28,838.00
59	SJO071	\$55,674.00
60	SJO072	\$213,130.00
61	SJO073	\$24,155.00
62	SJO074	\$36,328.00
63	SJO077	\$176,206.00
64	SJO080	\$6,918.00
65	SJO081	\$12,245.00
66	SJO086	\$11,225.00
Subtotal:		\$3,146,305.00

CANCELLED		
1	SJO013	\$9,825.00
2	SJO043	\$5,687.00
3	SJO045	\$16,707.00
4	SJO059	\$3,325.00
5	SJO088	\$14,808.00
6	SJO089	\$17,654.00
7	SJO091	\$3,929.00
Subtotal:		\$71,935.00

REJECTED		
1	iSJO001	
2	iSJO010	
3	iSJO011	
4	SJO002	Rejected After Clearance
5	SJO004	
6	SJO005	
7	SJO021	
8	SJO023	Never Approved
9	SJO051	
10	SJO060	

Administration and Operations

- **Activity Database (ADa):** Creative staff continues to update the Activity Database with information from the field. In addition, the DC-based team is working closely with the Implementation team in the field to ensure weekly tracking of grant expenditures and maintain adequate grant / operations funds control.
- **Finance:** All financial transactions continue to be managed from Washington, D.C. with support from a field finance assistant, working closely with grantees to ensure timely grant implementation. Projections for the last four months of the program are being developed to ensure obligated funds are fully committed and disbursed by the end of the implementation period.
- **Close Out:** Creative will begin the close out phase on April 1, 2012. Creative's Field Finance Manager conducted a review of grants as part of Creative's close out preparations. DC staff is working diligently to continue the review of all closed and cleared grant files to ensure all are complete and audit-ready.
- **GAO Audit:** On February 28, 2012, Creative received official communication from the GAO that CCSSP was selected for further review under a current review of U.S. programs to promote democracy in Cuba per request of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Creative looks forward to working with the OTI team and collaborating with the GAO Audit process.

3. Budget Information

CLIN	Description	Total	Obligated	Disbursed January 2012	Cumulative Amount
001	Operations	\$ 4,887,599		\$ 82,974.11	\$ 4,687,142.66
002	Fixed Fee Operations	\$ 244,380		\$ 4,148.71	\$ 234,356.96
003	Grants	\$ 10,200,000		\$ 107,608.59	\$ 4,726,507.34
004	Fixed Fee on Grants	\$ 204,000		\$ 2,152.17	\$ 94,530.22
	TOTAL	\$ 15,535,979	\$ 11,170,671	\$ 183,575.16	\$ 9,742,537.17

4. Problems Encountered: Issues and Proposed Actions

- There were no issues to report in this period.

5. Upcoming Activities

Creative has the following activities planned for March 2012:

- A new grant will be signed to continue and expand activities accomplished under SJO099.
- OTI/Creative will meet with the SJO082 grantee to confirm appropriate completion of corrective actions stemming from the internal audit, and determine if continued activities are possible within the Program's implementation period left.
- A representative from the follow-on grant to SJO099 will travel to a third country for training in OTI/Creative administrative processes.
- Focus groups will be held under SJO101 to validate product quality among target audiences. This process will capture the perspectives of different age groups and demographics. The current distribution campaign to increase the local audience will continue in March.
- A fifth set of deliverables will be produced and distributed under SJO102.

- Under SJO105, the grantee will produce a preliminary version of the final deliverable incorporating all approved draft components.
- During March, the SJO107 grantee will add a fundraising component to the local promotion and public relations campaigns to guarantee project sustainability.
- Creative will hold initial meetings with GAO auditors. The Chief of Party, Operations Manager and other DC-based staff will be available to respond to questions provided by the GAO.